

THURSDAY, MAY 29, 2008

## [The Criminalisation of War](#)

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When I was in Japan recently I had the opportunity to explain about Malaysia's Non-Governmental Organisation's campaign to make war a punishable crime.

The Japanese had been guilty of perpetrating brutalities during their Manchurian Incident and war against China and also during the Pacific War.

On the other hand they were the only people in the world to experience the first ever nuclear war, of having their citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki reduced to ashes by atomic bombs, with the loss of 200,000 lives and thousands more struck down by radiation sickness later.

For the Japanese the realities of war and the killings have been fully understood from their experience. I believe they can be expected to support a campaign to make war a crime.

I spoke about the horrors of war to three separate groups i.e. the Nikkei Future of Asia Forum, breakfast meeting with the head of Nikkei and his senior staff and before a full audience at the Foreign Correspondent's Club, Tokyo.

While in England in April I was invited by the Ramadhan Foundation to speak about the Criminalisation of War at the Imperial College in London.

An interesting incident was the attempt by Jewish students to stop me from speaking at the Imperial College because I am regarded as being anti-Semitic. The authorities were embarrassed by this demand and almost decided to stop me.

I was waiting for them to do so. Then I could go there to see if they would stop me. If they did I would be able to say that there is no freedom of speech in England.

However, the authorities decided that only students from the Imperial College would be allowed to attend. Still the hall was full with standing room only.

At all these meetings I was able to explain why war should be regarded as a crime. I pointed out that it is ridiculous to regard murder as a crime punishable with the most extreme penalty yet the deliberate killings of thousands of people, mostly innocent men, women and children are regarded as proper and legal.

There is a contradiction here which does not fit in with human values in a

civilised world.

Today trillions of dollars are being expended on the development and production of ever more lethal weapons of mass destruction. Poor countries are forced to buy these weapons by playing on their false sense of pride. They buy these expensive weapons so as not to be less well-equipped than their neighbours. Yet these weapons are often not used at all. Still they have to be upgraded or replaced with newer versions at tremendous cost.

Malaysia has been drawn into this game. We have bought two submarines costing over RM3 billion. When are we going to use them? Are we contemplating going to war with our neighbours? I can think of other ways of spending RM3 billion in Malaysia.

We need a defence force to preserve our independence. But do we have to be involved in an arms race? Only the suppliers of arms would benefit from an arms race.

War is not a solution for our foreign policy agenda. A stiff backbone is far more important. Unfortunately at the moment we don't have that.

The campaign against war and the criminalisation of war has gained momentum. This is going to be a long-drawn struggle. But it has to begin somewhere if we are going to achieve this radical change in the mindsets of people. God-willing insya'allah this struggle will eventually succeed.

Via this blog I would like to appeal to all Malaysians to support this campaign. We may feel safe from war now. But we must remember and think about all those people who now face the prospect of being bombed and rocketed, of having their heads and limbs torn from their bodies, of being killed. That they are non-combatants and have done no one any harm does not seem to matter to the warmongers. They will suffer all the same.

When war broke out in Europe in 1939 we in Malaysia thought we were safe. But we were not. In a world war we too will be subjected to attack. Our forces will not be able to do much.

We don't foresee this happening to us. But it can happen if war is still regarded as a way to settle conflicts between nations.

That is why I believe that it is important to make war a crime and so to stop it from being the way to settle conflicts between nations.

POSTED BY DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD AT [11:00 PM](#)